

Associative Housing

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The Melbourne outskirt of Broadmeadows has long suffered a reputation for being a rough outpost at the end of the line. Remaining one of Melbourne's poorest suburbs, Broadmeadows has a high unemployment rate of over 30 per cent and a relatively low weekly income of \$273. On the other hand, the diverse origins of the local people did not bring rich cultural mix to the area, but result in social fragmentation and region isolation. There is lack of vitality during the day; you see more piles of litter than people on the street. But when it comes to night, it is not uncommon to see fights, drugs and speeding within the district. The absence of social responsibility and pride in the Broadmeadows' communities is a chronic symptom, which is more brutal than being poor.

Reestablishing pride in the suburban communities becomes the driving force in the development of associative housing. Deriving from traditional Australian housing unit, the new Next-Gen house is a parametric model that can easily adapt itself to different family sizes and plot restraints. The inner corner of each unit, varying in size and shape, can become either a courtyard or a small gathering spot. Different units are then automatically grouped on the plot in order to embrace a promising public space.

On the same time, a transformable grid is applied to accommodate and unite a group of individual plot. Social, economical, political and environmental parameters would finally optimize the product to make sure this new typology fits into the existing physical fabric and creates positive interaction. Hence, the new suburban pattern is based on the growth logic, whereby the accumulation of different plot's social space generates various facilities and activities. The topology of the suburban network is similar to self-generated structures in nature and can response to changes during the housing development.

The existing master plan is based on subdivision according to local council's regulation. Each subdivided area offers one type of house to accommodate one income group and there has been a huge waste of land by providing private front and back courtyard to almost every single detached house. This associative housing proposal challenges Broadmeadows' existing model by providing affordable high density living strategy and introducing dynamic "unit-plot-cluster" planning programmes. Benefiting from this new system, social diversity is easily realized since one development can provide a various range of house types. Moreover, a complex but well organized social network starts to sprawl and influence the existing fabric, encouraging connection, interaction and communication within the local communities. A pride neighborhood will soon become real.